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## Viewing cable 06BEIRUT2600, LEBANON: FOR BERRI RESOLUTION COMES DOWN TO ONE

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Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
<a href="#">06BEIRUT2600</a>	<a href="#">2006-08-11 17:24</a>	<a href="#">2011-08-30 01:44</a>	<a href="#">CONFIDENTIAL</a>	<a href="#">Embassy Beirut</a>

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SUBJECT: LEBANON: FOR BERRI RESOLUTION COMES DOWN TO ONE  
THING

¶1. (C/NF) SUMMARY: On August 11 NEA A/S Welch, Ambassador, and PolOff met with Lebanese Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri, accompanied by his foreign policy advisor Ali Hamdan, at Berri's Ain Al Tinneh office. A/S Welch told Berri that we hoped that the UNSC resolution addressing the current conflict would be voted on today and that there were obstacles that needed to be addressed. First, A/S Welch advised Berri that the resolution will call for an expanded UNIFIL force under Chapter 7. Second, A/S Welch asked Berri to focus on the politics of Shebaa Farms rather than the language in the resolution. He assured Berri that Shebaa would continue to be an important issue after the resolution is passed. Finally, Berri expressed great concern that during the time between the cessation of hostilities and the deployment of UNIFIL, Hizballah would fire on Israeli troops in Lebanon. With an expansive view of defensive operations, Israel would retaliate with a devastating air or sea campaign on civilian villages. This would hinder his primary goal of bringing displaced Shia back to the south. Berri recommended using language similar to that of the "April Understanding" of 1996 as a foundation to address possible hostilities in the current context, while UNIFIL acts as a monitor. A/S Welch offered to take this idea to Prime Minister Siniora and GOI. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C/NF) Berri began by acknowledging a letter to him from the USG regarding the status of Moussa Sadr. He stated that Moussa Sadr disappeared in Tripoli, Libya, and after 27 years his case was closed. The case has been reopened and a Lebanese judge was sent to Italy because some witnesses are Libyan. He requested that any information that could be acquired by the USG from Libya about Moussa Sadr be passed to GOL. He said that such an effort would be helpful for all Shia.

¶3. (C/NF) On the current crisis, A/S Welch assured Berri that Secretary Rice was traveling to the United Nations to engage on the proposed draft UNSC resolution. Secretary Rice is working hard to stop the fighting and hoped for a vote on the resolution today. He told Berri that there were obstacles that needed to be addressed.

Chapter 6 vs. Chapter 7  
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¶4. (C/NF) A/S Welch reminded Berri that during their August 9 meeting, Berri insisted that the new UNIFIL force be placed under Chapter 6, while by contrast the Security Council will look at Chapter 7 for the new UNIFIL force. Berri inquired about having the UNIFIL force under Chapter 6 with the "right to self defense." The Ambassador reminded Berri that Chapter 7 offers Lebanon protection as well.

¶5. (C/NF) Berri admitted that the events of 1983 set a bad example for multinational forces in Lebanon under Chapter 7. Berri told A/S Welch that perhaps he is afraid of Chapter 7, and the U.S. friendship with Israel makes him even more afraid. He recognized that Israel wants the right to protect itself and said that "this will be included." He reminded A/S Welch that Resolution 426 establishes precedent for Chapter 6 with a clause for self-defense.

¶6. (C/NF) A/S Welch suggested that Berri consider the victory he has gained. Past discussions focused on a "multinational force" while today they are discussing an expanded UNIFIL force in response to Berri's concerns. "You can claim credit for this," exclaimed A/S Welch.

¶7. (C/NF) A/S Welch advised Berri that the resolution will call for a multinational force under Chapter 7, and the decision on that proposal is left to the GOL. Berri then joked that maybe the force can fall under Chapter 6 "and a half."

Shebaa Farms

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¶8. (C/NF) Berri informed A/S Welch that Shebaa Farms will always be the pretext for Hizballah to remain armed. He warned that the language in the current draft of the resolution on Shebaa farms is not sufficient.

¶9. (C/NF) A/S Welch asked Berri to focus on the politics of Shebaa Farms rather than the language. He assured Berri that the USG understands the significance of Shebaa Farms. Both A/S Welch and the Ambassador told Berri in the past that Shebaa Farms was only on the Lebanese agenda, but today Shebaa farms is on the international agenda -- he should declare that alone to be an achievement. Shebaa will continue to be an important issue after the resolution is passed. He assured Berri that Shebaa Farms is good news for Lebanon ""in spite of what is written."" Welch explained at length how problematic the Shebaa language is for the Israelis and how much Berri was getting from the U.S. in going as far as we have with the language.

¶10. (C/NF) Berri accused the U.S. of not wanting to engage on the Shebaa Farm issue because it does not want to give Hizballah a victory. A/S Welch agreed. Berri declared that it is his right to state for the record that problems will continue with Israel until Shebaa Farms is resolved.

Berri Interested in  
One Thing  
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¶11. (C/NF) Berri asked A/S Welch if the ceasefire remains in two phases. A/S Welch reiterated to Berri that the new draft calls for a ceasefire upon Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon. The withdrawal will take place immediately following the deployment of LAF and the new UNIFIL.

¶12. (C/NF) Berri emphasized that the ceasefire is the most important thing for displaced Shia to return to the south. He told A/S Welch that in the entire resolution he is ""interested in one thing, that people go home."" He questioned his ability to convince people to go home if there is fighting in the south. He commented that Israeli forces in the south after the cessation of hostilities would be fired on by Hizballah.

¶13. (C/NF) Berri was most concerned that in the event that Hizballah fired on Israeli troops in Lebanon, Israel would retaliate with a devastating air or sea campaign on civilian villages. This would start the war again and everything that was worked for in the resolution ""would be lost."" He insisted that he wanted a ""practical"" solution to this issue.

¶14. (C/NF) Berri reluctantly accepted the reality that if Israeli troops are fired on they have the right to defend themselves on the ground at the point of attack. However he added that defending themselves does not mean air bombings on civilian areas. He asked the USG to provide a guarantee that air and sea campaigns would not be used by Israel ""in defense."" He also asked that the UN act as a mediator in any post cessation of hostilities fighting. A/S Welch assured Berri that the current resolution calls on the UNIFIL-plus to act as the monitor of the cessation of fire.

¶15. (C/NF) A/S Welch received Berri's agreement that both Israel and Hizballah should not fire rockets and that there should be no re-supply of Hizballah from Syria. He also agreed that attacks on the ground are a risk that the USG and GOL could not control. Berri added that he could help promote stability in the south by bring the displaced back home. When the displaced go back, Hizballah will have less motivation to fight and ""this is an element of stability."" Berri also warned that, if the displaced do not return home within a month, ""I cannot guarantee the security of Lebanon.""

¶16. (C/NF) Berri suggested using a framework similar to the ""April Agreement"" of 1996 to address possible hostilities during the time between the cessation of hostilities and the

deployment of UNIFIL and LAF. A/S Welch stated that civilian areas should not be used as launching sites by Hizballah. Furthermore, if not used as launching sites, the civilian areas should not be struck by Israel as stated in the April Understanding.

¶17. (C/NF) A/S Welch offered that when the U.S. votes on the resolution, it could say that civilian areas should not be used as launching areas and should not be attacked. Berri cautioned that the wording should be precise and clear. Winking (and implying he was thinking of his "Hizballah partners"), he fears that the time between the cessation of hostilities and the deployment of an enhanced UNIFIL could be used by people who "do not want peace" to ignite the conflict again. Berri stressed the importance of assurances from the U.S. and UN that Hizballah fire on Israeli soldiers inside Lebanon will not start the conflict again because he doesn't "trust Hizballah."

¶18. (C/NF) Berri again mentioned that it is his priority to take the Shia back to the south. He assured A/S Welch that he would do what he could to maintain calm during the cessation of hostilities. Berri wondered if the Russian proposal for a 48-hour humanitarian cease-fire would be useful to give A/S Welch time to discuss this idea with Prime Minister Siniora and GOI. A/S Welch instead offered to take his ideas promptly to Siniora and the GOI.

¶19. (U) A/S Welch did not have the opportunity to clear this cable.  
FELTMAN